PAM.
AFRICA

The Ruth Tracy Strong Mission.

NEWS FROM BEIRA.

Arrival of Missionaries.

After attending the Annual Meeting of the American Zulu Mission in Natal Rev. and Mrs. F. R. Bunker and family sailed on July 2nd, 1905, from Durban, on the Austrian-Lloyd s.s. *Koerber*, for Beira. After a quiet and very pleasant voyage they reached Beira on July 6th and in two days were at home in the little cottage by the sea occupied by Mr. Bunker in April.

The Mission Home.

The most pressing problem of the first six months has been the provision of a home for the family and workers, and proper school accomodation. The cottage occupied by the family, a picture of which appeared in the *Missionary Herald*, together with the Stand on which it stands was purchased for £60 ($300)—an exceedingly low price. It consisted of two good-sized rooms with a verandah ten feet wide extending about the entire house. There was a small outside kitchen and two small one-room out houses also. A portion of the verandah was enclosed to make a sitting and dining room and the kitchen was enlarged, the changes costing about £90 ($450). The further plan was to put up a plain five-room building on the back of the same lot for the use of the school, helpers and guests. But on application being made to the Government for a slight increase in the size of the lot and permission to build the new house, the requests were refused and the hope of enlarging the work in this place cut off for the present. This was a severe set back to the work for the site was the most healthful and best situated in the entire region for mission purposes.

Arrangements were then made to purchase a house and lot from private owners about a mile further along the ocean beach. This house originally cost £850 but was greatly out of repair. The lot was a large one valued at from £200 to £400, the Government charging the latter price for the adjoining lots. The price charged for the house and lot was £350 which was afterwards reduced to £250, at which price it was purchased. The house has been thoroughly repaired and enlarged at an expense of about £450 and is now a very pleasant and commodious residence. It has been enclosed entirely with copper wire netting and made perfectly mosquito proof which involved a good share of the expense but is very necessary in this climate. The Mission family moved into the new house between Christmas and the New Year and are now comfortably settled. The cottage and its outbuildings will now be used for the native work and workers' residence.

The Health Record.

As is well known the health conditions have entered very largely into the question of beginning work in Beira. The town has a well-established reputation in South Africa for being a veritable "death-trap by the sea" because of malarial fever.

The experience of the Mission family thus far has been such as to contradict that judgment. Two of the children have had some fever but they had it before leaving Natal and it has not been worse in Beira. The health of the family has been and is excellent. The experience of other families resident in Beira would go to prove that it is fairly free from the severest type of malarial fever although the great and long continued heat of "Summer" (from November to April) is very trying and enervating. The "Winter" months (the remainder of the year) are very pleasant and healthful. The place gives promise of fairly healthful residence although the enervating climate will compel the taking of more frequent furloughs than are required in Natal and Rhodesia.

The next pressing need of the field is that of a missionary doctor and his family. There should not be any delay in sending these most necessary reinforcements to the new mission.

The Town of Beira.

Beira itself has wonderfully improved in appearance since 1893 when our Missionaries passed through it *en route* for Mt. Silinda. It is now a well built, well ordered small town, although many of the little iron shanties which then gave it character are still in evidence. There are now a goodly number of really fine buildings which would be an ornament to any town. There are three banks, several hotels and a number of good stores well stocked. There are fine cement side-walks on both sides of the streets extending throughout the town and two miles out into the suburbs. The streets are still the loose sand of former days but now a most unique little railway, the admiration of all visitors, is laid in them. On this railway native boys push little white-canopied cars with speed and much comfort to the passengers. The cars hold two persons and are of many styles and colours. They are private property and the owners pay a license to the Government for the use of the railway line. The Government also has a steam trolly line which runs at certain hours, but the private cars are a great convenience and run at the will of the owners.

It is an interesting sight during business hours to see the white-clad men—for there are few women—moving about the streets. White suits, hats, and boots are the ruling fashion for all. The business hours are from seven to eleven o'clock in the forenoon and from one to five in the afternoon. The life is easy to suit the climate.

The Inhabitants.

The ends of the earth meet together on the streets of Beira. The Portuguese are the official class and the Portuguese language is that used in official documents and all Governmental affairs. The business community is largely English and the business language is also English, while there are smaller numbers of other European nationalities, French, German, &c. Then there comes a conglomerate population of Syrians, Egyptians, Arabs Indians, Chinese, and other nationalities, while there is among these a mixed creole race calling themselves Portuguese who are of all shades from the pure black to the "sickly white," as Mark Twain calls it, of their European fathers. Then under and around all is the dark background of the dusky denizens of the land—despised but depended upon, loathed but lusted after, denied social status but enticed into the most intimate life fellowship.

The Natives.

Like most Euro-African towns, Beira has no resident native population. There were 1,122 native people in the town in 1904 but there are few native homes. The natives come to town for service only and the population is constantly changing. Four months is the most common term of service and then they return home for a "rest," but to see them work one would think that they might work for a hundred years at the rate they do without needing a rest. They are splendid great fellows physically, fat and sleek and muscular,most of them clad only in a loin cloth even on the streets, showing their well-built bodies to advantage.

The women come mostly for immoral purposes. There is no public sentiment nor law against their occupation. That which is considered dishonourable and disgraceful in Christian and civilised communities is the fashion in Beira. And it is remarkable how quickly the "doing as the Romans do," will divest a civilised man of his civilization and Christianity —if he ever had any—and make him outrank a heathen in rankest heathenism.

Drink of the vilest concoctions—stupifying and deadly drugs—are sold to the native *ad libitum*. The men get their pay on Saturday night, drink and dance all day Sunday and are too stupid and dazed to work on Monday. Through the *Beira Post* and the Chamber of Commerce an agitation is being made to get the Government to inspect the liquor, and curtail the number of licences for selling it. But a man would be considered a fit subject for deportation to propose a prohibition of all drink to the native.

Mission Work.

As soon as the Missionaries arrived the native boys began to come and asked to be taught. A night school was begun and in a short time there were twenty-five boys in attendance. The school was reported to the authorities immediately and the Governor gave official sanction for its establishment. The boys who came were at work in town and, since many of them were needed to wait on their masters at the usual late dinners of the place, they did not arrive at the school until about nine o'clock. The school was kept from nine until eleven at night. As the Curfew rang at nine o'clock the boys needed passes to return home and the Governor, himself, suggested the granting of passes to them by the Missionary and that a list of the passes granted should be handed to the Superintendent of Police. When the passes were shown to the Superintendent he affixed his own signature of approval to them. There were in all about forty such passes issued and the average attendance was about twenty-five.

The officials were exceedingly cordial and obliging and all seemed well for the work. The business men in the town were also very cordial to the missionary apparently and every effort was made to commend the work to these classes as reasonable and beneficial. It was remarkable how eager the boys were to be taught. Not one was asked to come to school by the missionary or his helper. They came of their own accord a distance of about two miles in the dark, stayed until a late hour and then returned home to arise early the next morning and work all the day and this was continued for four and a half months and the school was growing in interest and attendance. The teaching was all in the native language. was notified of the arrangements with the former Governor and gave his most hearty approvol which he has appeared to maintain to the present.

Everything which seemed possible has been done to meet the requirement of the Government and to allay the usual prejudice of the European residents towards mission work. A rule was made that any boy who was found to have neglected his work would be denied the privileges of the school. Several boys had been compelled to leave the school owing to their masters needing them at the time it was in session. The greatest precautions were taken to keep the school from becoming a nuisance to the community and every effort was taken to make it able to commend itself as a benefit to the community by increasing the honesty, decency and intelligence of the native servants. Good and faithful service to their masters was taught and urged upon the pupils as a prominent teaching of the school.

No opposition was known to exist against the school, except the usual predjudice and talk which would occur if the angel Gabriel himself came to teach the natives, when one day Mr. Bunker was told by the American Consular Agent, in private conversation, that the business men were indignant at his issuing passes to their servants. No word of this complaint had previously come to his knowledge. The manner in which it had come about that he began to issue passes, viz.: at the Governor's suggestion for the purpose of meeting police regulations, was explained and after considering the matter carefully and recognising the reasonableness of the master's right to know the whereabouts of their servants at night Mr. Bunker consented to withdraw the passes which he had issued,

although he was assured by the officials that it was not necessary, and insist on the boys getting passes from their masters or withdraw from the school.

Upheaval.

This change had nearly been effected when one night in November twelve of the school boys were arrested by the police on their way home and the next morning were all given six blows on each hand with a hammer-like instrument of punishment—no small punishment.

On the same morning the teacher, Mhlanganiso, was sent to town and not returning when expected and it being rumoured that he had been arrested, Mr. Bunker went to the Superintendent of Police to inquire what the matter was. He was told that the twelve boys were punished for disturbing the peace of the town at eleven o'clock at night, and that the teacher had been arrested for refusing to leave the side-walk when ordered to do so by the police and had struck a policeman in the altercation and that his case had been referred to the Governor whom Mr. Bunker must see. He went to the Governor who said that he knew nothing about the matter but would inquire. After two days Mr. Bunker was informed that the teacher had resisted the police and had been sentenced to one month's imprisonment, but that he, the Governor, out of consideration for Mr. Bunker would reduce the sentence to one week but that no fine would be received in lieu of imprisonment.

The next Sunday some of the boys who were beaten returned to the Station and said that at the time they were beaten they were told that if they returned to school again they would be beaten and imprisoned also, and they were afraid to come.

On the release of the teacher it was found that he was not aware of the offence for which he had been punished although he had repeatedly asked to be informed. He had been called into the police barracks by a native policeman who had been friendly to him, thrust into prison and within an hour of leaving home, without trial, hearing or examination, was put into the chain gang with criminals, having a chain around his waist like the rest, and set to work on the public streets and kept at it for eight days. When he reached home after release from imprisonment he, for the first time, became aware of the charge against him of which he was both innocent and ignorant.

An interview with the Governor was sought by Mr. Bunker through the local agent of the Mission but was not secured, although the word was sent to him that "the Governor could not listen to complaints of the business community against Mr. Bunker and he was free to go right on with his school work as heretofore." Legal advice has been taken on the above circumstances and they will probably not be repeated Here the matter rests as present.

Conclusion.

An open letter is not the place for comments and our friends may make their own.

The school is not in session in a regular way. Many of the boys have not returned to school but all are begging to have it re-opened. It will soon be re-opened in the form most advisable.

The punishments administered to the boys and teachers have furnished an excellent advertisement to the entire native community that there is an enterprise under way to bring enlightenment and life to them. They are not slow to show their appreciation of the fact.

An enquirers' class has been formed of those who wish to become Christians in which are three of those boys who were beaten.

We again urge our friends to bear their part in this campaign for the Kingdom of God in gifts and especially in prayers for the work and workers.

Beira, East Africa, January, 1906.